

Postscripts

By Jack Post

What happens in the heat of summer? First of all, everyone heads for the beach, any old beach, anywhere; but if they are discriminating, Duxbury Beach. Last Sunday, everyone who owned beach stickers drove out over the long bridge in a constant parade, rattling the planks, keeping those indomitable fishermen penned in their 3-foot sidewalk with all the traffic, filling both the inshore parking lot and every space out behind the dunes, jamming the bicycle racks, guaranteeing the beach wardens and the lifeguards extra sunburns when they couldn't sneak away even for a minute. People rode, walked, probably even swam out to the beach, until every square yard that could hold a towel was covered.

You took your choice of the bay shore or the ocean side. Inside you have several advantages, a gradually sloping sand that allows inattentive mothers and fathers more time to rescue the toddling generation intent on swimming on their own, plus warmer water

which tempts everyone to stay in until they are waterlogged. Also, for the tenderfoot there is more smooth sand, fewer pebbles. Finally, for those willing to walk a few hundred yards, the channel swings in close to the back side of the beach a quarter of a mile toward the Gurnet, where you can step from the bank into superb deep-water swimming, even at dead low tide. Just watch out, because the current runs fast in that sluice, and before you know it you can find yourself swimming backward, farther and farther from your shoes and towel.

If you choose the outside, you are in good company, lots of it. Here you squint at the dazzling white of the beach, such of it as you can see between the people, out over the blue water, 3,000 miles to Spain, if you look far enough, just to the left of Race Point at Provincetown some 17 miles away with its Pilgrim tower visible when the conditions are just right. You can't look all that far for long, though, because some frisbees or some softball or some kite will get you if you don't watch out.

With the tide out, most of the athletic activity dashes along the water packed slope up to high tide mark. From there back, the sand is soft, better for lying, reading, turning crimson as you sleep. The best policy for watchers unlimited is to locate just above the delicate fringe of seaweed, where you can sit in a hand-dug depression contoured to your personal curves. There, from behind either dark glasses or a sun visor, you can admire the powerful torsos and handsome builds of the males or the seductive and undisguised curves of their companions. If by some misfortune you are not attracted to either of these types, there are as many engaging children as you can possibly want to see making castles, splashing, teasing each other or running away from their families as anywhere in the world. If you have a taste for the ludicrous, you can indulge that en masse, but be charitable. Even you may look like that some day.

Get ready for a shock when you try the water. The first wave, breaking and eddying, feels pleasantly cool, no more. When you have stumbled another 10 yards over the pebbles and stones swirling under the foam, you begin to notice a chill on your ankles which intensifies when the next wave sucks at the back of your legs. Halfway in is painful, but the rollers, small as they may be on this beach, know just how to paralyze your mid-parts with a sudden surge. There's nothing for it but to plunge in, which produces instant shock. You lurch to your feet, get knocked down by the next wave, start running drunkenly toward the warm salvation only yards ahead. Before you make shore, something happens. Your stimulated body tells you this is great. You face outward and plunge back in once more, flailing the water, shouting in ecstasy. You don't stay long, but suddenly the world is vivid and real.

How long you stay depends on many factors like age, state of your sunburn, your hunger or thirst, the water in your ears, how many kids have been with you for how many hours. As we left in the dusk, a great disk of a moon rose from the water offshore, and a new set of devotees began to arrive, hand in hand. The young lady with us observed with slight puzzlement, "I don't see why anyone would want to come to the beach after dark." We did.